

The Future Roman Liturgy — How Roman?

Recent crisp and constructive comments on the 1969 Roman calendar¹ point clearly to the need for considerable further discussion on the question. Yet, such discussion must take place within the context of a broader examination of the nature and purpose of the Roman liturgy at its present stage of postconciliar development, as also of reflection on what its future might be. The comments that follow are necessarily sketchy, but may serve to stimulate profounder discussion of the issues.

Any organically evolving entity displays at any particular stage of its development both the vestiges of its past and the seeds of its future. Such is the case with the liturgy of Paul VI, as few would deny. Even the most farsighted of the scholarly men who brought the liturgical movement to the floor of the Council or of the Fathers who endorsed their proposals could not have foreseen that the pace of development would be so rapid. The immediate task was the reform of the Roman liturgy and this was approached on the solid basis of post-Tridentine scholarship. The aim was the restoration and reinvigoration of a Latin Roman liturgy. Previous euchological treasures were restored, elements of value retained and lacunae filled with new compositions in the same style. This is particularly evident in the formularies of the temporal and sanctoral (the latter including the commons). Yet there is another side to the liturgical renewal represented in the Roman Missal: provision of texts for specifically contemporary needs, where previous models were almost by definition extremely scarce. This concern can be seen especially in the rather heterogenous corpus of texts at the end of the Missal headed "Ritual Masses" and "Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions."

These latter texts are to be seen rather in the context of the restoration of the Ritual and Pontifical, which tends with some exceptions to be a far freer creation, whose texts are very often but thinly dis-

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¹ See R. Nardone, "The Roman Calendar in Ecumenical Perspective," *Worship* 50 (1976) 238-246; *Chronicle*, 269-273.

guised transpositions into Latin of modern expressions and ideas. Considering the history of the Ritual, it is not surprising and only pastorally right that the restored texts should envisage vernacular celebration and leave within generally defined structures considerable room for local adaptation.

Although it would be unfair and inaccurate to push the analysis too far, we might say that the Roman liturgy of Paul VI is a more or less peaceful coexistence of the best of yesterday's Latin liturgy with a timorous draft of a primarily vernacular liturgy for today. Yet in the case of the Missal the degree of freedom of adaptation accorded to local churches is far smaller than for the Ritual and Pontifical and development in the Roman Missal since the publication of the calendar and ordinary of the mass (1969), shows great conservatism. The second edition of the Latin Missal (27 March 1975) displays a certain assimilation of and adaptation to developments in the Latin Roman liturgy, including the acceptance of ritual formulas devised in the meantime and of masses for reconciliation and of Mary, Mother of the Church, published for Holy Year celebrations. It did not make any real attempt to include the specific provisions of the Directory for Masses with Children, nor does it explicitate conclusions which might have been drawn from that document for analogous pastoral situations. Given the experimental nature of the eucharistic prayers of 1974, these were not included. It should in fact be remembered that the eucharistic prayers for children, though published in a Latin translation, are not to be used in Latin — an obvious point for common sense but a rather curious development from the standpoint of the ancient Roman liturgy.

Far more significant among the list of elements that the second Latin edition fails to include, are some sober provisions of the French and German missals. In accordance with the Circular Letter on Eucharistic Prayers of 1973, the French- and German-speaking dioceses obtained approbation for certain special formulas for use within the eucharistic prayers of the Roman Missal. Basically the German ones extend the range of variants for the Roman canon and then adapt them all to Prayers II and III, thus breaking the hegemony of the Roman canon above all in ritual celebrations and the great festivals of the year. The German Missal makes very extensive provision for mass formularies on ferial days which the Latin Missal likewise makes no attempt to emulate. For the latter, we should perhaps be grateful since the aim of the Germans, as of the

Dutch in a similar initiative, was to create prayers composed in the vernacular. Many countries now use the Apostles' Creed as an alternative. The German Missal gives at the head of the formulas for each saint's day in the calendar a brief biographical note similar to that in the liturgy of the hours but more pastoral in tone. These are but a random selection of developments in the vernacular missals of countries whose scholars played a leading role in the liturgical revisions of the Latin liturgy.

This failure of the Latin Missal to assimilate sober developments which could without great difficulty be accepted into the Roman rite raises a variety of difficulties. It can be admitted firstly that not all adaptations or additions in vernacular missals need or can be accepted into the Roman rite as such. This is obvious especially in the case of non-Western adaptations of gestures, texts and structures. There can be no serious suggestion, however, that such profound cultural considerations are involved in the German adaptations that they cannot equally well be applied with profit in the United States, or most Western nations. They come from the same sources as so much of the postconciliar liturgical renewal and we may well ask if there is any good reason for excluding them, in effect, from more general circulation and publicity at least.

Yet even the few "adaptations" mentioned have consisted almost exclusively in additions to the Latin Missal or in extremely minor adaptations of it. Nothing is in principle left out, even though it may be transformed somewhat in translation. This seems to me an increasingly intolerable burden for a truly pastoral and living liturgy to carry. While not wishing to direct carping criticism at the valiant efforts of ICEL, I find many of the texts in their Missal wholly inadequate, among them the ordinary Sundays, a good deal of the Lenten eucharology and of the proper of saints. A literal translation would be a thousand times worse, but a translation on the level of ideas fails precisely because the ideas of the original are very bald when one strips them of their latinity or, in the case of the best of the saints' collects, of the precise verbal allusions that are impossible to convey in another language. The enterprise of providing an adequate English version is doomed from the outset by the source.

The Dutch and German initiatives in providing a body of weekday masses are an attempt to meet a difficulty which many feel. Even granting that the Sunday masses were suitable for Sundays, they are certainly not suitable for random repetition on weekdays. The new

Latin liturgy urges the maintenance of the temporal cycle against encroachment by superfluous celebrations of saints or votive masses without giving adequate means to achieve this. Unless a most unsatisfactory recourse is to be had to votive masses of devotion on weekdays, or to the very few "Masses for Various Needs" which are general enough and rich enough to bear the burden of repetition, there is no option but to use the Sunday masses as polyvalent texts which take no account of the dominant themes of the celebration as contained in the Scripture readings, nor of the tone of the day of the week nor of the time of day. There are themes and images, as the liturgy of the hours recognizes, which are more appropriate to certain hours of the day and days of the week, even in "time throughout the year." Despite the increasingly general extension of Sunday obligation to Saturday evening, very little has been done to develop a real character for such celebrations which would at the same time foster and safeguard the primacy of Sunday. The vigil mass, though scantily represented in the new Missal, is nevertheless an obvious possibility. I am not advocating a series of texts corresponding to every hour of the day, but I think there is considerable scope for developing celebrations which respond to such obvious differences of human mood as exist between a Saturday or Sunday evening mass and a Sunday morning one. In practical terms it is unfortunately, after all, the sole liturgical experience of many people. It seems to me likewise that in composing weekday prayers, the lead of the liturgy of the hours could be followed in bringing out the special character of Thursday and Friday, and to a lesser extent Saturday. If that were done the current votive masses could largely be absorbed, though not necessarily textually. After Vatican II, it should surely be possible to improve greatly upon the texts of the common of Mary, for example. A theologically and spiritually more substantial cycle of Ordinary Sunday and ferial weekday masses would also justify the removal of other uneasy duplications of the seasonal mysteries of the Lord which are found in the sanctoral and in such celebrations as the solemnities of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart. It is not a question of abolition but of more satisfactory integration into the liturgical cycle.

All this would undeniably represent a substantial adaptation of the present Roman Missal, but is that any fault? It seems to me that the time has come to sever the uneasy relationship existing between the Latin and vernacular missals at present and to forge a more realistic

and pastorally useful one. The revision which has led to the new Latin liturgical books was well done within its terms of reference. It seems to me that at that point we should recognize that the development of an authentically Latin liturgy has reached its end. Once the Latin liturgy of Paul VI has been shaped into an internally self-consistent whole, let it rest on its merits as a starting point and a foundation for the development of vernacular liturgies. It should not, however, be allowed to hamper these latter in their growth for the future. The unity of basis has been given and future unity must be secured by other means. I think Rome could have a considerable role to play in maintaining unity, but it must be a unity based on broad cultural similarities and general, if not universal, pastoral usefulness. It would be foolish and pretentious to suggest that between countries such as the United States and Britain, major differences of rite should develop in the foreseeable future, or even between the United States and France. Cultural differences are insufficient to justify it, at least where general structures and distribution of themes are concerned. Much of what is found pastorally useful in one country will be of value elsewhere. It seems to me that Rome and restructured agencies such as ICEL could do much to coordinate exchanges of information on such initiatives and promote the orderly evolution of common features.

The starting point of this article was the Roman calendar. The same remarks would apply to it as to the Latin liturgy of which it is a part. The rigid imposition of such an extensive calendar of obligatory celebrations is most unreasonable and pastorally unwise. The vernacular liturgy shows up many an obscure figure who continues to lodge there, and a good number of equally obscure ones whom the revision actually added with the aim of universalization. A much reduced general list of genuinely universal celebrations needs to be drawn up as a matter of urgency. In my own opinion all memorials should by definition be optional.² Just as sometimes multiple optional memorials now appear for a single date in the calendar, it would be possible to give for each day of the year perhaps up to five saints of widespread, though not necessarily universal, interest whose *dies natalis* falls on that date. A greater variety of descriptive titles could be added to each name, including indication of the na-

² See *Worship* 50 (1976) 269-270.

tion for national apostles, of the see for bishops, of the order for founders, and so forth. The manner of commemoration would be by a mention in the anaphora and perhaps the bidding prayers of the mass and the intercessions of the liturgy of the hours. The presidential prayers of the mass would be those of the season. Unless this is done, the memorials will continue in popular parlance to be "feasts"³ which fail to be of sufficient real moment to arouse celebration as such, thus clouding the sense of the temporal cycle and devaluing the notion of what a feast is.

Much could also be done to simplify the relation between feasts and solemnities in the liturgy of Paul VI. One very simple and acceptable way would be to limit the term solemnity by definition to celebrations of the Lord and for practical reasons, with the exception of Christmas and its octave day, to transfer them all to Sundays. It is necessary here to challenge an assumption apparently shared by many non-Catholic calendar revisions, namely, that the calendar should as a fundamental stratum contain celebrations of a wide range of New Testament figures. Rather than distinguishing Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany, it would seem far more pertinent to ask if either of them have any real place in a modern calendar. Such minor characters serve a purpose in the gospels in illuminating the person and work of Christ but otherwise they have little substance. At most they might be gathered into a common memorial of disciples of the Lord and his apostles. Nor should the apostles be excepted from such scrutiny. A common celebration for all apostles, together with feasts of Peter and Paul, of the confession of the former and the conversion of the latter, and individual celebrations of the evangelists would be more than adequate, leaving other individuals to be celebrated as local patrons. The Assumption, as the *dies natalis*, would naturally be maintained, but the feasts of the Nativity of Mary and the Immaculate Conception, though well established, could be considered for absorption into the Annunciation as part of a reordered Advent liturgy. They are, after all, mere extrapolations from this celebration. From among the former memorials a very few truly universal saints could be selected as feasts: Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Francis Xavier, and two or three others. These would be joined locally by the main patrons and other local saints could be

³ Not surprising when a rough glance through the ICEL sanctoral prayers reveals at least nineteen memorials whose texts refer to them as "feasts" and such cases are not rare in the commons.

given priority in the daily lists of saints, but not made obligatory. Genuine, as opposed to theoretical or diplomatic, local interest should determine celebration. Within the feasts, externals of solemnity will make sufficient distinction between them. All in all, I would envisage a calendar proper of some twenty feasts of saints (celebrations of the Lord falling within the temporal cycle), coupled with and balanced by encouragement to *name* saints of real interest on their true *dies natalis* or equivalent, without endless transfers.

These suggestions for the sanctoral, which presuppose a corresponding increase in quality and spiritual substance in texts provided, would reduce its bulk in vernacular missals to a quarter of its present extent. In practical terms this would help keep vernacular missals within manageable proportions.

The question of eucharistic texts for saints involves ultimately a new look at the place of saints in Christian life, along the lines of Vatican II. Although real attempts have been made in the present revision to evoke something of the specific personality and work of each saint in many texts, others remain simply more or less appropriate borrowings from standard formularies. A close range of rather trite formulas still persist, evoking in some standard phrase the saint's teaching and example, or requesting his intercession or else expressing confidence in it. While no doubt these elements could be retained very often in more imaginative expression, there is plenty of scope for focusing more directly on the work and person of Christ. The revision has rightly excluded standard references to the fact that Saint —— founded a new religious order, but if the saint is to be named within the anaphora, is it even necessary as a rule to mention him in the collect?⁴ It would seem to me more satisfactory very often to highlight some aspect of the work of salvation that is associated with the saint. Where the liturgy of the hours is concerned, these principles could be applied in a broader fashion and help eliminate the kind of text now found in the commons there. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* for the Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Paul VI writes: "What is needed is that texts of prayers and chants should draw their inspiration and wording from the Bible . . ." (no. 30). Such a course, prudently followed, would enable us to eliminate the airiness of many private compositions and even of ICEL's valiant

⁴ See *Worship* 50 (1976) 271.

attempts. In this respect some of the best compositions to emerge from the liturgical renewal are found not in the Missal but in the Jesuit proper. They make an unfortunate but notable contrast with many of the national, diocesan and religious propers recently approved, which on the whole are clear evidence of just how far the spirit of renewal yet has to penetrate. Roman collect forms need not hold undisputed sway, despite their desirable brevity. Other models can be readily seen in the prayers of preparation ("Blessed are you . . .") and in the prayer for peace ("Lord Jesus Christ, you said . . ."), while a trinitarian direction could be better served than by the current conclusions.

We have already dispensed above with eucharological texts for memorials, but before those for feasts are rearranged thought must be given to the role we expect them to play within the liturgy. Some liturgists have advocated the removal of that dreadful clutter of elements that separate the greetings and introduction from the opening prayer and I wholeheartedly agree. Except for the obvious fact that a Latin liturgy has a veritable library of settings for these texts, there would seem little justification for retaining them in their present form and position. However, if we do remove all these elements from the opening rites, a more obvious weight will be given to the opening prayer, which will consequently have to have a little more relevance to what is about to happen than many of the present ones, which display no awareness very often of the themes of the readings and eucharistic prayer to follow, or indeed that they are to follow at all. The prayer over the gifts is better suited to its function, except that so often it is an anticipation of the eucharistic prayer. It would seem better to try in vernacular liturgies to devise some simple litanic prayer that could encompass the elements represented legitimately at present by the penitential rite, the prayers of preparation and the prayer of the faithful. Models could be provided, preferably showing a little more creative spirit than those at the back of the present Missal. The litanic structure, while remaining fairly free, could help exclude the series of miniature sermons, socio-political harangues and sheer orgies of moralization to which many parishes now invite their people to assent. If this new structure featured pauses for silent prayer then it would begin to serve as a true tone-setter and catechesis for the praying of the inevitably more generally formulated eucharistic prayer. A similar simplification would be more than possible in the rites that follow the anaphora, including

possibly some variable text to replace the present "Deliver us, Lord . . ." and the prayer for peace, though incorporating the main point of this latter. Perhaps a series of variable settings for the Lord's Prayer, with coordination between introduction and conclusion, could be composed. Finally, it has become clear that the rather strained literary terms used by Latin to disguise what is rather a tedious standard reference to the act of communion in the prayer after communion cannot be reproduced in similar variety in English at least. Perhaps here too a certain combining of elements within the general form of the present solemn blessing would allow the essential point of such a reference to continue, while giving a better conclusion to the celebration as a whole.

It need evoke no dreadful forebodings of neo-Gallicanism or plain heresy, if we give a less ambiguous recognition to the fact that no liturgy whose celebration comes naturally to the people of North America, France or Poland can be a Roman liturgy. Let us profit critically by the amassed experience it represents and press on, not with the luxury but with the necessity and duty of evolving what can only be non-Roman liturgies. I have purposely not made any mention of the situation facing the Churches of Africa, Asia, Oceania and even South America. I take it for granted that the transformation there will be of necessity more radical.



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